

Heavy rains hit tobacco crop in Mysuru

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The copious rainfall in the region during the monsoon may be a reason for most farmers to rejoice. But, tobacco farmers, who had received a very good price for their produce last year, are worried about the 10 to 20% of crop loss they have suffered on account of the rains this year.

Against the crop size of 100 million kg for the year sanctioned by the Tobacco Board, Javare Gowda, president of Karnataka VFC (Virginia Flue Cured) Tobacco Growers' Association, said the yield may dip by 20 million this year. But, board officials estimated the dip in harvest to be in the range of 10 to 15 million kg. Last year the total quantity of tobacco harvested was 106 million kg even though the crop size was restricted to 99 million kg. "About 7 million kg of excess tobacco was grown last year," said the official. This year, the output is expected to be 10 to 15 million kg less than the stipulated crop size.

Attributing the decline in tobacco output to heavy rainfall and poor sunshine during the last couple of months, a board official said the crop has been particularly hit in Periyapatna and Ramanathapura.

The farmers are hoping to make up the loss suffered on account of decline in yield by good prices. The average price of tobacco reached an all-time high last year with the farmers receiving ₹139.40 per kg, an official said.

The farmers earned roughly ₹1,400 crore for the 106 million kg of tobacco sold through auction platforms last year. About 80% of the tobacco grown in Mysuru is exported to different countries in view of its superior blending quality and other features.

This year, the farmers have already harvested about 60 to 70% of the crop and are facing difficulty in safely storing tobacco leaves in the prevailing weather conditions, Mr. Gowda said. “There is possibility of damage to the leaves if they are not disposed off soon, The weight and colour of the harvested tobacco leaves could suffer in the prevailing weather conditions,” he added while appealing to the Tobacco Board to advance the auction season, which is scheduled to begin in the second week of September.

Board officials said scheduling of the auction in Karnataka is linked to auction season in Andhra Pradesh. The auction here is likely to begin before September 10.

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